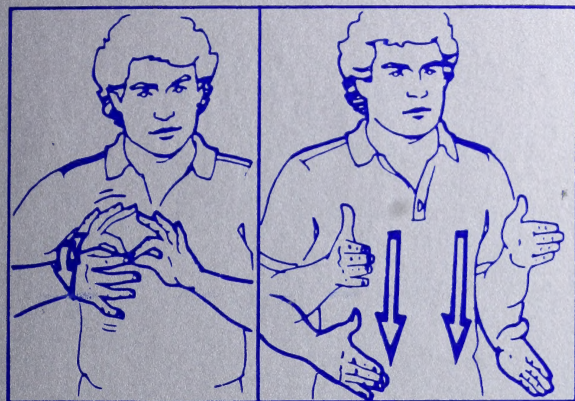


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The Use
of an

INTERPRETER

in an
Educational Setting:
Guidelines and Standards



Alberta Education
Response Centre

PDN
536413

The use of an interpreter in an educational setting: guidelines and standards

CANADIANA
62
DEC - 2 1988

Alberta Education
August, 1988

Education Response Centre
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Edmonton, Alberta
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Acknowledgement

The Response Centre of Alberta Education acknowledges the work of an Alberta School for the Deaf Committee, headed by Darlene Karran and Cynthia Pearson, in the production of this document.

Alberta Education Cataloguing in Publication Data

Alberta. Alberta Education Response Centre.
The use of an interpreter in an educational setting:
guidelines and standards.

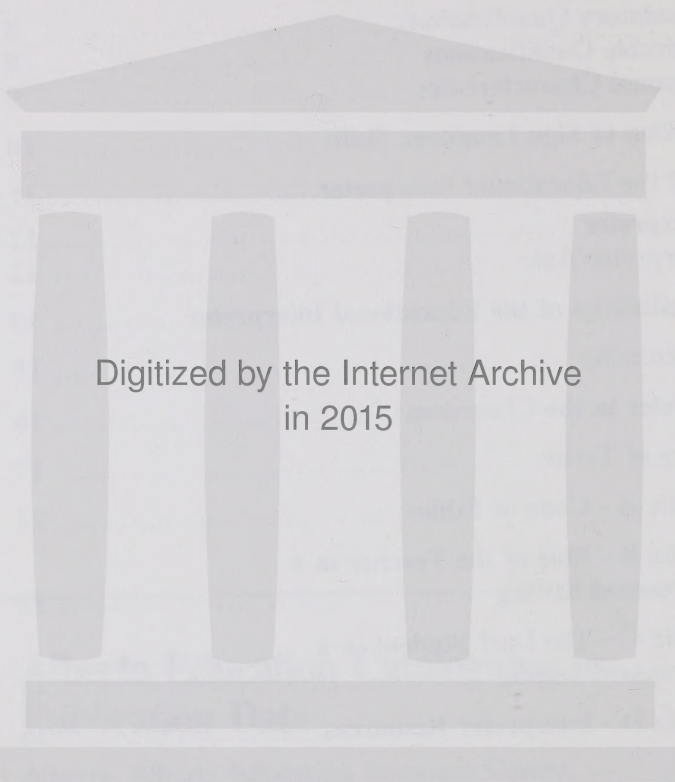
ISBN 0-7732-0073-8

1. Interpreters for the deaf. 2. Deaf -- Means of
communication. I. Title.

HV2402.A333 1988 371.912.7

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Purpose

This document is intended to assist staff of Alberta schools and school jurisdictions in the hiring and supervision of interpreters/aides for deaf students with a view to ensuring that these individuals provide appropriate services, are competent, and meet generally acceptable standards. It is also intended to assist in the development of job descriptions for interpreters in educational settings so that administrators and interpreters have clarity about the role of the interpreter.

Introduction

The Educational Interpreter

A mode of communication commonly used among deaf people is sign language (see glossary). A sign language interpreter is a person who is fluent in both English and sign language and acts as a communication link between those who are deaf and those who are not. Because the sign language interpreter is the intermediary (the medium) through which communication takes place, it is vital that this person also be able to communicate accurately from spoken English to sign language and from sign language to spoken English. The sign language interpreter translates language between the hearing and the deaf in a variety of settings - e.g., in classrooms, job interviews, religious services and television broadcasts.

An educational interpreter is a person hired to facilitate communication between a deaf student and hearing teachers and peers in a classroom setting. The educational interpreter is responsible for "translating" from a signed language to a verbal one and from a spoken message to manual communication. The interpreter will sign, to the deaf student, everything that is said by the teacher or other students in the classroom. The interpreter will also speak, to express what the deaf student communicates in sign language, so that other students and the teacher can understand the deaf student.

Sign Language Communication Systems with Deaf Students

It is recognized that an English-based sign language system, such as Signed English, will be utilized for instructional purposes within the classroom and school setting. It is an important consideration to note, however, that an English-based sign language system is **not** the deaf students' native language. American Sign Language or A.S.L. is the deaf students' first language.

A.S.L. is a language quite distinct from English with its own grammar and syntax. Thus, deaf students' abilities with the English language may not equal their hearing counterparts. This will affect their written work as well as their reading comprehension.

For the Educational Interpreter, knowledge of these two sign language systems is a definite asset (see glossary).

Qualifications Required of an Educational Interpreter

A. Mandatory Qualifications

1. Fluency in English and Sign Language
2. Knowledge of the Code of Ethics (Appendix A)
3. Ability to translate and interpret

B. Desirable Qualifications

1. Comprehensive Skills Certificate (CSC) obtained through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) evaluation system. Candidates for the CSC are evaluated in the following areas:
 - (a) Performance in Translating (Glossary) - voice to sign, sign to voice
 - (b) Performance in Interpreting - voice to sign, sign to voice
 - (c) Knowledge of the Code of Ethics (Appendix A)
2. If an interpreter has not been through a formal evaluation process, the following should be considered:
 - (a) Completion of a recognized interpreter training program.

One such program has been established at Grant MacEwan Community College, Edmonton. This program provides students with basic, practical knowledge and skills required for entry into the profession. Other training programs are offered at Red River Community College in Winnipeg and Sheridan College in Toronto.
 - (b) Experience in Interpreting.

Some individuals may not have had formal training but may be fluent in sign language through their

active involvement with deaf and hearing impaired people over a number of years.

Hearing children of deaf parents often develop various degrees of fluency in sign language. These individuals are regarded as "native" signers, and although they may not have had formal training, their experience should be taken into consideration.

C. Personal Characteristics

The interpreter should demonstrate maturity, flexibility, objectivity, and a professional attitude. In addition, the person should have the ability to work as a team member, and the ability to work with students.

Evaluation of Sign Language Skills

School jurisdictions may request that an evaluation be conducted by specialists at the Education Response Centre in conjunction with Alberta Chapter Registry Interpreters for the Deaf (ACRID). (Appendix D). Such an evaluation would be helpful in assessing interpreter skills required in an educational setting and would provide an objective description of candidate's signing skills.

Role of the Educational Interpreter

There has been an increasing demand by parents and school jurisdictions for interpreters at the elementary and secondary levels. During these years in schools, it is crucial that deaf students have qualified educational interpreters who are also knowledgeable about deafness.

The interpreter functions as part of an educational team and as an extension of the teacher in the classroom. In addition, the interpreter often needs to be skilled in other areas.

Expectations of the interpreter, and a discussion of special skills at both the elementary and secondary levels follow:

- A. Particularly at the elementary level, students often regard the interpreter as a parent figure as well as their communicator. They look to the interpreter for encouragement and for clues as to what is right and wrong in their educational environment. At the same time, the interpreter has to encourage independence. Deaf students should follow the same rules as the hearing children in the classroom.
- B. The interpreter may need to assist the entire class in accepting and understanding each deaf student. The interpreter is often the liaison between the deaf student and the regular teacher, who may turn to the interpreter as the expert on hearing loss and its implications for instruction. The interpreter may, in turn, refer questions about hearing loss to other resources in the community. Hearing students often become interested in signing, and the interpreter may be asked to teach sign language to students and the teachers.
- C. Students have varying degrees of proficiency in different modes of communication. Some students may rely more upon speech and speechreading to convey ideas. Other students, however, may rely more upon sign language. Several combinations are possible among students in one class and the interpreter must respond to individual needs.

- D. The interpreter needs to be proficient in voice interpreting i.e., vocalizing a deaf person's signed message not only in the classroom but also in situations such as counselling sessions, parent meetings and telephone calls.
- E. With younger children, the interpreter may need to be more animated to maintain attention and clarify the lessons. The use of mime or gestures may also be required in order to aid in comprehension.
- F. The interpreter needs to be skilled in large group interpreting which is required at assemblies, graduations, pep rallies, and so on.

The interpreter may fulfil two roles in a school situation. One role is where the interpreter's job is solely to act as an interpreter. The interpreter may also be required to assist the teacher in other duties, particularly in an elementary setting, in which case the interpreter is acting in a dual capacity, as an interpreter/aide. A distinction between these two roles is as follows:

A. Interpreter

The interpreter's role in facilitating communication in the elementary and secondary classroom has already been described. Here the interpreter's main function is to transmit accurately everything that is being communicated among the teacher, the student and peers.

B. Interpreter/Aide

The interpreter may be hired as an interpreter/aide in which case duties will also include those of a teacher aide. Since it is often difficult to distinguish between the duties of an interpreter and those of an aide, such duties and responsibilities should be delineated in advance to ensure that the interpreter is not overburdened and that the deaf student is not deprived of needed services.

Interpreter/aides may, on occasion, be employed to work with students who are aphasic and mentally handicapped. Although these students are not deaf, sign language is often effective in teaching. However, the interpreter's first priority is to interpret for the deaf student.

Responsibilities of the Educational Interpreter

1. The educational interpreter should accurately relay instructional information, including the subtleties and nuances that speech conveys.
2. The educational interpreter should transmit a student's questions or replies to questions to the teacher in the language level used by the student.
3. An educational interpreter should **not** speak on behalf of the student or teacher, but should encourage both to speak to one another directly while facilitating the communication.
4. The educational interpreter must be capable of working in a given setting, keeping in mind that each class has its own procedures and technical language; should understand the material; and should be able to interpret the subject without embarrassment (sex education, for example) or over-emotional involvement. In the event the interpreter is unfamiliar with the class material, he/she must be prepared to spend time familiarizing him/herself with same.
5. An educational interpreter may be required to explain questions on a test while ensuring that the answer is not divulged.
6. The educational interpreter may, with permission from the instructor, be required to assist the student in composing written answers, initiated by the student, or to interpret the student's signed answers into written form.
7. An educational interpreter should sign all spoken messages and voice all signed messages in class.
8. The educational interpreter should be available to provide information at educational conferences and case meetings.
9. The educational interpreter should assist school staff and other individuals by providing information or referring

them to other sources on hearing impairment and sign language.

10. Educational interpreters should be familiar with school rules.
11. An educational interpreter should consider carefully his/her attire in order to reduce eye strain for the deaf student. The hands must be clearly visible against the interpreter's clothing. The interpreter should position her/himself close to the teacher in order for the student to be able to view them both with ease.
12. An educational interpreter must maintain confidentiality of information regarding students.

Confidentiality

It is expected that the interpreter will maintain confidentiality regarding the student's grades and his/her standing in class. The interpreter functions as an integral part of the academic team and therefore has access to information. This information may be discussed within a case conference as appropriate, but such information must be kept confidential within that setting.

Interpreter in the Classroom

It has been demonstrated that the presence of an interpreter in a classroom does not have a detrimental effect on the instructional process. Although hearing students may show initial attention to the sign language, the interpreter soon is accepted as a routine aspect of instruction. In fact, the presence of an additional responsible adult in the classroom often has a positive effect on the provision of instruction.

Glossary of Terms

Sign Language - is a language or system of communication that involves the use of hand and finger signs and gestures. Deaf and other hearing impaired people use sign language. People with normal hearing also use it to communicate with the deaf. Sign language is used in many parts of the world for communication between groups of people speaking mutually unintelligible languages.

Following is a description of various types of sign language.

I. American Sign Language (ASL)

Gestures do the work of spoken words in this language used by many deaf people and their children. It is now generally recognized by linguists as a separate, distinct language from English, with its own grammar inflections, and idioms. Ameslan, Sign, and Sign Language are other terms for ASL.

II. Manually Coded English (MCE)

Manually Coded English is a general term that can be used to include the following Pidgin Sign English (PSE) systems designed to represent English: fingerspelling, Seeing Essential English, Signing Exact English, etc.

A. Pidgin Sign English (PSE)

PSE involves the use of ASL signs in English word order with the proportions of ASL and English varying according to the practitioners. This may include speaking, wordmouthing, fingerspelling (abbreviations and “slurrings” are tolerated), gestures, occasional ASL grammar, “new” signs, body English, facial expressions, etc. Siglish, Ameslish and Sign English are other terms. Signed English and Manual English have also been labels applied to this type of manual communication system.

1. **Ameslish** is defined as a combination of Ameslan and English. The proportions of the elements vary according to the verbal levels of the practitioners. Ameslish is a more inclusive term than Ameslan and presents a truer picture of communication by deaf people.

2. **Sign English** is the term selected by Pre-college Programs for its approach to manually coded English. It refers to the use of the salient features of two languages, English and ASL.
 3. **Signed English**, developed under the direction of Harry Bornstein, is a manually coded approach used in conjunction with speech for young deaf children. It has been termed an educational tool, and involves a limited set of sign markers which show affixes and verb tense.
 4. **Siglish** - sign language methods that approach close approximation to English language structure and grammar. This method again uses both fingerspelling and signs for concepts and words of normal English grammar.
- B. Manual English** is a generic term used to refer to artificially developed codes for representing English. In general, such systems advocate a one-sign, one-word approach; the addition of a large number of affixes; newly invented signs, etc.
1. **Fingerspelling** is the use of handshapes, movements, and orientations to represent letters of the alphabet and ampersand (and). This may or may not be used in conjunction with speech. Visible English and the Rochester Method use fingerspelling and speech exclusively.
 - a. **Rochester Method** also called Visible English, a means of communication in which English words are fingerspelled and spoken at the same time.
 2. **Seeing Essential English (SEE₁)**, originated by David Anthony, is a manually coded communication system which employs a one-sign, one-word principle.
 3. **Signing Exact English (SEE₂)**, created by Gerilee Gustason, Donna Pfetzing, and Esther Zawolkow, is another one-sign, one-word system with certain rules which depart from SEE 1. Signs (root words) are selected and utilized according to spelling, sound, and meaning. Compound and complex

words require affixes or the signing of component words such as “cowboy” when the meaning relates to the separate components. However, words like “butterfly” require single signs.

4. **Signed English**, developed under the direction of Harry Bornstein, is a manually coded approach used in conjunction with speech for young deaf children. It has been termed an educational tool and involves a limited set of sign markers which show affixes and verb tenses.

III. In-Group Signs refers to signs understood by a relatively small group of people. These may be subdivided into the following:

- A. **Home Signs** - Signs developed and used by individual families. These may range from near-mime gestures to more sophisticated signs used only by the family members, and are generally limited to relatively few sign words. They may be used by hearing families in a manner akin to “family jokes.”
- B. **School Signs** - Generally signs developed by children in a school setting, often because of the lack of adult deaf models. Every school has examples of these. They are not often understood by deaf adults in the community.
- C. **Local Signs** - Signs which are somewhat like regional dialects. The sign for football, for instance, may vary from region to region, just as a sandwich may be called in English a hoagie, submarine, grinder, hero, poor boy, etc.

IV. Other Terms

- A. **American Sign Language (ASL)** - is the language commonly used among deaf people in North America. ASL has its own structure and syntax quite different from the English language.
- B. **Deaf Person** - is one whose hearing is impaired to an extent that precludes the understanding of speech through the ear alone, with or without the use of a hearing aid.

- C. **Fingerspelling** - where each letter of the alphabet is represented by a different hand formation. It is a way to translate English words, but it is not in itself a sign language.
- D. **Hard-of-hearing Person** - is one whose hearing is impaired to an extent that makes difficult, but does not preclude, the understanding of speech through the ear alone, with or without a hearing aid.
- E. **Interpreting** - is the process of conveying ideas from spoken English to signed ASL or to view ASL and convey these ideas into spoken English.
- F. **Native Signer** - is the hearing child of deaf parents who has acquired fluency in sign language.
- G. **Oral Interpreter** - is a hearing person who has been professionally trained to provide interpreting services between hearing persons and hearing impaired persons who rely on speechreading and speech to communicate.
- H. **Signed English** - is a manual English system designed to be used with speech. It is a system in which the signs, although largely taken from ASL, represent the meanings of words found in standard English dictionaries. They do not represent the spelling or the sound of those words.
- I. **Sign Language Interpreter** - is a hearing person who has been professionally trained to provide interpreting services between hearing persons and hearing impaired persons who communicate primarily through sign language.
- J. **Translation or Transliteration** - is the process of listening to spoken English and conveying the same message as precisely as possible into manually Signed English, or viewing Signed English and voicing English.

Appendix A

Code of Ethics

The Registry of the Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) - (1980), has developed a set of guidelines for professional conduct to protect both consumers and Interpreters/Translitterators. The following Code of Ethics reflects the expected standards of conduct and behavior of working Interpreters/Translitterators.

1. Interpreters/Translitterators shall keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.
2. Interpreters/Translitterators shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker, using language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve.
3. Interpreters/Translitterators shall not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.
4. Interpreters/Translitterators shall accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and the consumers involved.
5. Interpreters/Translitterators shall request compensation for services in a professional and judicious manner.
6. Interpreters/Translitterators shall function in a manner appropriate to the situation.
7. Interpreters/Translitterators shall strive to further knowledge and skills through participation in workshops, professional meetings, interaction with professional colleagues and reading of current literature in the field.
8. Interpreters/Translitterators, by virtue of membership in or certification by the R.I.D. Inc., shall strive to maintain high professional standards in compliance with the Code of Ethics.

Reference: **Introduction to Interpreting.** (1980). Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. Silver Spring, Maryland.

Appendix B

Role of the teacher in a mainstreamed setting

Tips which a teacher may employ to assist in the teaching process with deaf as well as hearing students are:

1. Use the blackboard or overhead projector to present new information in a visual way. New vocabulary should be presented in print as well as verbal form.
2. Identify speakers during group discussions to enable the deaf student to follow and participate in discussions.
3. Minimize movements which distract or block the deaf student's view of the teacher.
4. Provide the deaf student with an outline of the class format so he/she can follow the process.
5. Address the deaf student directly.
6. When talking, look directly at the deaf person, not the interpreter. The interpreter will sign what is being said. It is important that the teacher watch the deaf person's expressions in response to his/her statements and questions. This will assist in communication.
7. Speak at a normal rate. This helps the interpreter and the deaf person. Do not speak too slowly as it makes it difficult for the interpreter to provide a smooth interpretation.
8. Do not say things to the interpreter you don't want repeated to the deaf person. The interpreter is there to relay messages back and forth. If feelings are expressed by the teacher the interpreter is obligated to interpret what is said.
9. It may be necessary to appoint a hearing student to be a note-taker for the deaf student during class lectures.

Appendix C

The deaf student in a mainstreamed setting

Students should be aware that they have some responsibilities in the classroom. The following are some DO's and DON'Ts to help them actively participate in the classroom.

DO's

Talk to the hearing person, not to the interpreter/tutor. You should say to the hearing person, "I want to know..." The interpreter/tutor should be sitting with the hearing person so that you can watch the interpreter/tutor and the hearing person at the same time.

Find a seat which is a comfortable distance from the Interpreter. Ensure that the interpreter and the teacher are in clear view (including any AV materials or the blackboard).

Ask the teacher to arrange for a note-taker if one is required. If you are dissatisfied with the note-taker, consult the teacher.

Say if you do not understand the hearing person. It is very important that you let people know if you do not understand them so they can say things in a different way.

DON'Ts

Expect the interpreter/tutor to remember things for you. E.g. homework assignments, test dates, page numbers and supplies to bring to class. Interpreters/tutors are interpreting the information between you and the hearing person. It is your responsibility to write down things you must remember.

Blame the interpreter. If the answer is not what you want, don't blame the interpreter/tutor. The hearing person decides for him/herself.

Tell the interpreter something that you don't want them to tell the hearing person. If the hearing person sees you signing to the interpreter/tutor, he/she will want to know what you are talking about. **The interpreter/tutor is there to interpret *everything* that is said.**

DO's

Say if you do not understand the interpreter/tutor's signing. All interpreters sign differently, and you may understand some better than others. Tell the

interpreter/tutor that you do not understand his/her signs so that he/she can change them. If you still cannot understand the interpreter/tutor, talk to the Co-ordinator about it.

Ask the teacher if a point is missed during class time. It is your responsibility to ask.

Direct your questions to the teacher or hearing person, not to the interpreter/tutor. The interpreter/tutor will speak your questions for you.

Speak slowly and distinctly, when using voice. Be aware of your vocalizations which may interfere with other students.

Pay attention to questions of other students so you don't repeat the same questions.

Show the interpreter any technical signs which may be relevant to the course.

Face the group or the person who asked you the question, when answering or asking a question. Deal directly with the teacher or individual, maintaining eye contact in order to build rapport.

DON'Ts

Expect the interpreter to think (or say things) for you. You talk and think for yourself. An interpreter/tutor is there to tell the hearing person what you are signing.

Blame the interpreter if you fail an exam. It is your responsibility to study and prepare for exams, as well as to do your assignments.

Ask the interpreter's opinion about the teacher.

Chat with the interpreter during class time. This time is for getting work done and paying attention.

DO's

Ask the teacher about the work you missed if you are late or absent.

Be aware that during interpreting from video programs, oral reading or group discussions, the interpreter has little control over speed and sound quality, therefore some parts of a lecture may be missed especially from a videotape.

Ask the teacher if the interpreter/tutor can sign questions on an exam to you if you have problems with the written English.

Get to know your classmates. Often students benefit from studying together. Also you may want to ask a classmate for help.

Ask questions. If you don't understand the lecture, ask the teacher to explain. Maybe others in the class want to know too.

Remember that the interpreter is human and has good and bad days just like you.

DON'Ts

Appendix D

Interpreter Resources

The following organizations are available to provide support to educational interpreters and their employing agencies:

1. a) **The Alberta School for the Deaf**, as a unit of the Education Response Centre, provides information on deafness and sign language. The School can assist in screening prospective candidates for their sign language abilities. Information on beginner, intermediate, and other sign language courses are also available through the Education Response Centre and the Alberta School for the Deaf at:

Education Response Centre/Alberta School for the Deaf
6240 - 113 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 3L2
Telephone: 422-0244

- b) Additional information on "hearing impairments" is available through the Automated Message Library known as the Response Line. You may access the information by calling:

- In Edmonton and local area - 422-0266
In Calgary and rural Alberta - Dial 0 and ask for Zenith 2-2126

2. Alberta Education Documents:

- a) **Hearing Impaired Child in the Regular Classroom** - available from

Learning Resources Distributing Centre
12360 - 142 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 4X9
Telephone: 427-2767
Cost: \$1.20

b) Curriculum Guide for the Hearing Impaired - available from

Central Support Services Branch
Alberta Education
8th Floor, West Tower
Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 0L2
Telephone: 427-7224

Cost: \$22.00 (free if ordered through the Superintendent's office)

c) Counselling for the Hearing Impaired

Career Development for the Hearing Impaired - both of these documents are available from

Learning Resources Distributing Centre
12360 - 142 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 4X9
Telephone: 427-2767

Cost: \$1.40 - Career Development for the Hearing Impaired

\$1.35 - Counselling for the Hearing Impaired

3. Provincial government funding is available for the payment of interpreters outside of regularly scheduled classroom activities (e.g. doctor's appointments, evening home/school association meetings, legal/court appointments). Interpreter services in Northern Alberta can be accessed through the Alberta College Interpreter Referral Service at the

Alberta College
10041 - 101 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
Telephone: 428-1851

and in Southern Alberta through the Society for the Hearing Handicapped at

Society for the Hearing Handicapped
63 Cornell Road N.W.
Calgary, Alberta
Telephone: 282-1201 282-9494 (TDD)

4. **Grant MacEwan Community College (GMCC)** has recently established an intensive Interpreter Training Program that provides students with basic practical knowledge and skills required for entry level into the interpreting profession. GMCC is an additional resource for information on interpreting as a profession. Resource materials and videotapes are also available through the GMCC Library at The Cromdale Campus (477-0211).

5. **The Alberta Chapter Registry Interpreters for the Deaf (ACRID)** is the Provincial Chapter of the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf based in the U.S.A. and is also affiliated with the Canadian national organization of interpreters. ACRID is a professional organization of interpreters which provides support through information, newsletters, workshops and professional development.

ACRID also provides a public relations function to the community. This can involve public speaking to schools regarding interpreting as a profession, and information to community agencies such as the police, hospitals, and law courts, regarding the use of interpreters and the rights of the deaf.

ACRID maintains a Grievance Committee which deals with concerns arising from an interpreter's performance or conduct. The Registry also has available for loan an eight minute videotape entitled "Interpreters, The Inside Story." This tape provides a general overview of the profession of interpreting. Further information about ACRID and its resources can be obtained by calling 422-0244 (messages only).

6. **The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Southern Alberta (AVLISA)** is a support group for interpreters. Contact Southern Alberta Deaf Centre at 282-1201.

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